

Games and Society

Course and Instructor Information

Course Information	Instructor Information
HONORS 350-003	Dr. Dylan Barth
Honors Seminar in the Humanities	djbarth@uwm.edu
Spring 2019	(414) 229-7464
HON 155	Engelmann B50D
TR 3:30-4:45 p.m.	Office Hours: TR 2:00-3:00 p.m.

Course Description

“Playing a game is a voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles.” —Bernard Suits

In this course, we will closely examine the role of games in American culture from a wide range of perspectives. We will discuss cooperative and competitive analog, digital, and hybrid games. We will address recent contemporary issues surrounding gaming, such as eSports, Gamergate, and gaming addiction. We will read fiction and watch films about games. Most importantly, we will play all sorts of games—and thoughtfully interrogate them—every week in class. In addition, we will explore the fundamentals of game design. What makes a game fun? What are the steps for developing a game? How might game design principles impact other areas of our lives? In short, you will leave the class with a fully-designed and playtested game of your own creation.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Articulate how games affect and reflect culture
- Interpret the functions of games in fiction and film
- Analyze the underlying structures of digital and analog games
- Apply an understanding of game design fundamentals
- Develop an original game from concept to prototype
- Explain the rules of a game verbally and in writing

Required Texts

- Gee, James Paul. *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*.
- Lu, Marie. *Warcross*.
- McGonigal, Jane. *Reality Is Broken*.
- *Ready Player One* (film)

Canvas Help

We will be using Canvas for online quizzes, readings, and assignments. Please consult the [Canvas help documentation](#) or [contact Canvas directly](#) if you have any trouble with Canvas.

Grades

In-Class Activities

We will be doing a variety of in-class activities when we meet, which will include, among other things, large-group discussions, small-group work, in-class writing, playtesting, and, of course, gaming. You should expect that at every class period, at least one in-class activity or assignment will be assigned that contributes to this portion of your final grade. You cannot make up missed in-class activities because, well, you kind of have to be there. The lowest three grades in this category will be dropped, which means that you can miss up to three classes without penalty.

Homework Assignments

I will be assigning 10 homework assignments in this course that will ask you to extend or apply concepts from the readings or from class. Each homework assignment will be different, but all of them will require you to do at least 500 words of writing. I will provide specific prompts for each of the assignments the Tuesday before they are due. These assignments contribute toward meeting the OWC Part B writing requirement of the course. As odd as it may sound, please **submit all Homework Assignments in Canvas without your name in the Word document**; I will be grading these submissions anonymously. You can expect to receive grades on submitted work within 7 days of the due date. For each day a Homework Assignment is late, the grade for that assignment will be reduced by 10%.

Quizzes

You will be asked to take 9 quizzes and one survey over the course of the semester. The quizzes are intended to test your understanding of the syllabus as well as fundamental game design concepts that you will be reading that week. We will then apply those concepts in class as part of a weekly game design workshop that will help you with the Final Project.

Final Project

For the Final Project, you will be designing a card, dice, board, or role-playing game. The Final Project will be comprised of four design phases: Concept, Progress, Instructions, and Presentation. More details about the Final Project will be available in Week 3.

Final Grades

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Final Grades by Points

In-Class Activities	2,500 points
Homework Assignments	2,000 points
Quizzes	500 points
Final Project	5,000 points
TOTAL	10,000 points

Final grades will be determined using the following scale:

Final Grades by Letter Grade

A	9,300 points
A-	9,000 points
B+	8,700 points
B	8,300 points
B-	8,000 points
C+	7,700 points
C	7,300 points
C-	7,000 points
D+	6,700 points
D	6,300 points
D-	6,000 points
F	Less than 6,000 points

Course Schedule

The schedule of assignments for this course is available in Canvas within the weekly modules on the course Home page, in the To-Do list on the course Home page, and in the Canvas calendar.

Game Materials

I will be keeping various game pieces (cards, card sleeves, dice, miniatures, etc.) in our classroom for use in and out of class. As you are working on your Final Projects, feel free to visit the room if it is available and use what you need for playtesting purposes. If you want to take any of the game pieces out of the room, please let me know so that I'm not taken by surprise when planning for in-class activities.

Daily Scribe

For each class period, I will assign a Daily Scribe. The job of the Daily Scribe is to take note of the most important topics and discussions of that day. These notes will be added to the Canvas site for all students to access, so please write legibly and do your best to capture the ideas of the class. Your help is much-appreciated!

Time Expectations

According to UW System policy, "study leading to one semester credit represents an investment of time by the average student of not fewer than 48 hours" (UWS ACPS 4). In other words, a 3-credit course such as this one will require a minimum of 144 (3 x 48) hours of your

time. Learning takes time, after all! You may find it necessary to spend additional time on a course; the numbers below only indicate that the course will not require any less of your time:

- 40 hours in the classroom;
- 80 hours preparing for class, which may include reading, note taking, reflecting, journaling, and completing homework assignments; and
- 24 hours preparing for a Final Project.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism, or passing off someone else's work as your own, is not acceptable in the academic community. When using the exact words or even the ideas of other people, you need to indicate the source using proper citation—with in-text citations and full citations on a Works Cited page. We will go over citation conventions in class. Students found plagiarizing or engaging in other forms of academic misconduct are subject to severe sanctions, which include a failing grade for the course and a letter in their university file that may lead to suspension or expulsion from UWM. So why risk it? If you have any questions about whether or not something might be considered plagiarism, ask me.

Final Note

I reserve the right to adjust the syllabus and course schedule as needed. If I do make any changes, I will provide you with the details in a timely manner.

Campus Policies

- [Academic Misconduct](#)
- [Active Duty Military Policy](#)
- [Complaint Procedures](#)
- [Discriminatory Conduct Policy](#)
- [Final Exam Schedules](#)
- [Grade Appeal Procedures](#)
- [Incomplete Policy](#)
- [Religious Observances](#)
- [Title IX and Sexual Violence](#)

Campus Resources

- [Accessibility Resource Center](#)
- [Center for International Education](#)
- [Inclusive Excellence Center](#)
- [LGBT Resource Center](#)
- [Military and Veteran's Recourse Center](#)
- [Norris Health Center](#)
- [Panther Academic Support Services](#)
- [UWM Libraries](#)
- [Women's Resource Center](#)
- [The Writing Center](#)